



# Washington State Department of Agriculture News Release

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## **State proposes action to keep European gypsy moth out of Washington**

OLYMPIA – After reviewing this summer's trapping results, the state Department of Agriculture is proposing action to prevent the European gypsy moth from becoming established in two Western Washington locations. Control measures are called for when a reproducing population of gypsy moths is present. The locations are the Vader area of Lewis County, where 10 moths were caught; and the Crown Hill area of Seattle, where eight moths, four egg masses and five pupal cases were found. Control measures are taken in spring, typically beginning in late April or early May.

"If we don't eradicate the gypsy moth infestations at these two locations, they will spread," said Dr. Clinton Campbell, pest program manager at the state Department of Agriculture. The gypsy moth is one of America's worst forest pest insects.

**Three treatment options are under consideration.** One method, or a combination of methods, will be selected based on potential effects to human health, environmental considerations, and the effectiveness of the product as demonstrated by past use. All three insecticides under consideration are registered for use in the U.S. by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.

- Gypchek – a virus that affects only gypsy moth caterpillars. The caterpillar must eat Gypchek for it to have an effect.
- *Bacillus thuringiensis* var. *kurstaki* (Btk) – a bacteria that affects only caterpillars, including gypsy moth. The caterpillar must eat Btk for it to have an effect.
- Diflubenzuron – a chemical that disrupts the growth of caterpillars.

**In Vader, an aerial treatment of 560 acres is proposed.** This follows a ground treatment of Btk applied to 29 acres last spring. Last year, 76 gypsy moths and 10 egg masses were found in the area. This year, 10 moths and no egg masses were found. State entomologists believe a reproducing population of the moth is still present.

**In Crown Hill, a ground treatment of 16.5 acres is proposed.** This is the third straight year that gypsy moths have been caught in Crown Hill. In 1999, three moths were caught, and in 2000, one moth was caught.

For maps of the treatment areas, visit Department of Agriculture's Web site at <http://www.wa.gov/agr/gypsy.htm>.

A decision on the treatment method will be made in the next four months, following preparation of a State

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Environmental Policy Act (SEPA) environmental checklist and a draft National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) environmental assessment. Any comments submitted by citizens in response to either of these documents will be carefully reviewed before a decision to proceed with the treatment is made.

The gypsy moth is permanently established in 18 Northeast states where it feeds on the foliage of more than 500 species of trees, and causes enormous damage to the environment and the economy. The European gypsy moth was first detected in Washington in 1974. Introductions have occurred nearly every year since then, but the state Department of Agriculture has eradicated every one through:

- An aggressive summer trapping program that identifies where new introductions of gypsy moth have occurred;
- Treatment programs that eliminate infestations in the spring before they spread; and
- Excellent cooperation among local municipalities, the public, U.S. Department of Agriculture, and other state agencies regarding summer trapping and spring eradication programs.

The department plans to conduct a public information effort in Vader and the Crown Hill neighborhood to explain the nature of the gypsy moth threat and the proposed treatment. This will include letters to residents, businesses, and elected officials; presentations before community groups; an open house in early February; information on the WSDA Web site; and a toll-free Gypsy Moth Hotline (1-800-443-6684) for individuals to call to obtain answers to questions.

For more information, call the Department of Agriculture at (800) 443-6684 or visit the agency's Web site at [www.wa.gov/agr](http://www.wa.gov/agr) and click on "Gypsy Moth."

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